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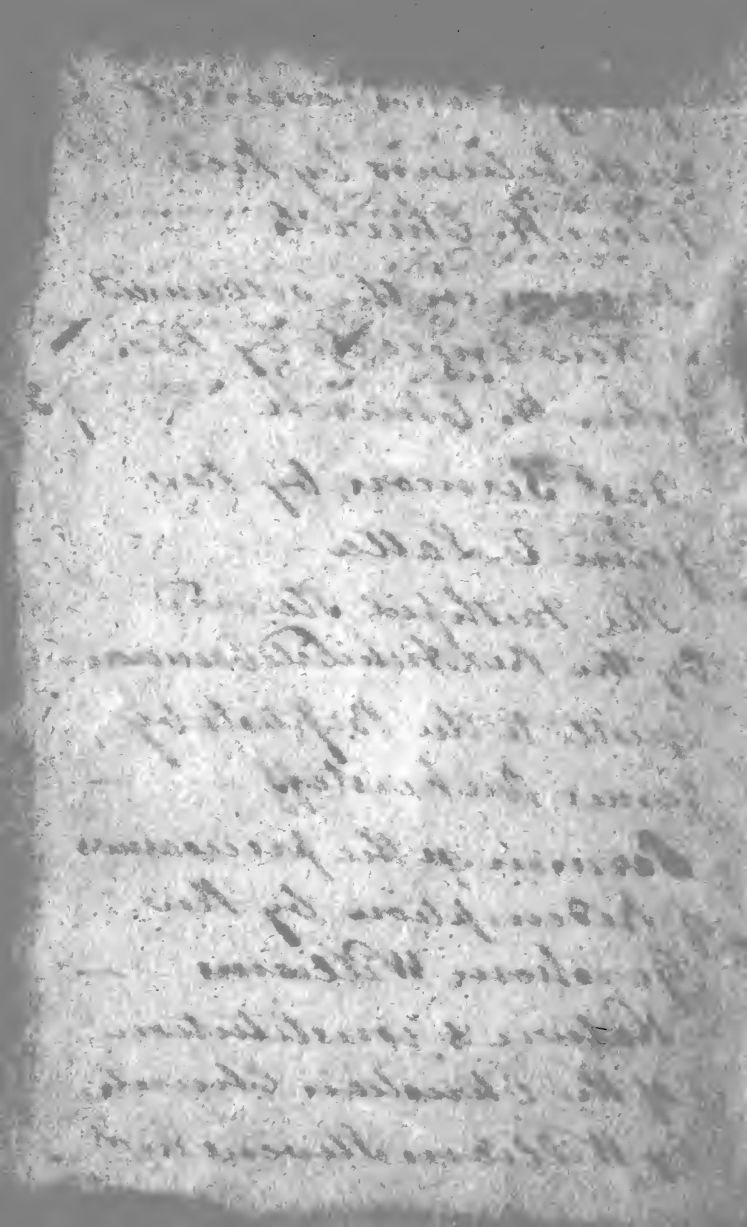
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PRECIOUSNESS OF REDEMPTION.

A

SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

General Association

OF

CONNECTICUT,

AT

LEBANON, JUNE 22, 1809.

BY REV. GERSHOM WILLIAMS, A. M.

MINISTER OF A CHURCH OF CHRIST, IN SPRINGFIELD, N. J.

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*Rev. J. M. Dove
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SERMON, &c.

PSALM xlix 8.

For the redemption of their soul is precious and it ceaseth for ever.

IN the sacred writings we find various passages, the precise import of which is not easily ascertained. The design of infinite wisdom in this, must have been, to lead to deep and thorough investigation, and to draw the mind to the contemplation of various subjects, each of which may be important and useful.

The passage that has just been read seems to be of this description.—By the redemption here spoken of, may be understood a price paid to deliver either from *natural* death, from *spiritual* death, or from both. The *preciousness* of that redemption may mean either the greatness of the price necessary to the purchase, or the desirableness of that redemption.—Its ceasing for ever cannot, consistently with the grammatical construction of the sentence, be understood as referring to the soul, but to the redemption of it—and the ceasing of that redemption, may either import the impossibility of man's accomplishing the redemption of the soul, or it may refer to the perfection of that redemption which Christ has already accomplished. It ceaseth for ever, that is, the work is complete, it is not to be repeated, it is finished.

In our context there is an indisputable reference had to the unavailing nature of earthly treasures, to stay the hand of death. “*They that trust in their wealth*” “*and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches :*” “*none of them can by any means redeem his brother,*” “*nor give to God a ransom for him: That he should*” “*still live forever and not see corruption.*” In the midst of this sentence, inclosed in a parenthesis, our text is found.—And viewing it in this connexion, it seems to import, that although it would be very desirable to have it in our power to purchase a release for our brother, when death makes his demand; yet this would require a price which none of us could ever lay down.

The passage however is to be considered as looking further, and having reference to the redemption of the soul by Jesus Christ.—This was an object highly desirable, and though far beyond the power of mortals, it is gloriously complete in Christ. This is the sense given of the passage by Doctor Hammond and others, and in this light we shall consider it at present; and *shall* endeavour to show that the redemption of the soul of man is highly important and desirable. This will appear from considering its miserable state by nature—its capacity for happiness—the price paid for its redemption—the glory that will thereby accrue to the SACRED THREE—and the consequent increase of happiness, among the various ranks of holy intelligents.—The plan of my discourse is now before you.

1. Then that the redemption of the soul of man is highly important and desirable, will appear from considering its miserable state by nature.

Nothing is more evident than that man is in a fallen, wretched state.—All the moral powers and faculties of his nature are disordered—his understanding is darkened—his will is perverse, and his affections depraved.—The knowledge of the true God is lost, or as the Apostle, in his epistle to the Ephesians, says, the understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.—Hence evil is called good, and good evil ; light is put for darkness, and darkness for light ; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. The fountain of living waters is forsaken, and the poisonous streams of sensual enjoyment are preferred. The true and only rest for the soul is deserted, and a substitute is vainly sought for among the trifles of earth. Real friends are spurned away, and the most dangerous enemies are embraced as cordial friends.—Hence the soul is led captive at the will of Satan and wheedled along the broad descending way that leads down to his dire abodes, while she vainly dreams of bliss.—Oh ! unhappy delusion ! Surely the redemption of the soul is precious.

In this state of alienation from God, the soul can never taste of real felicity. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. They are like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Their joys are all polluted and imaginary ; and though pleased with their present situation, they are in cruel slavery and perform the most unreasonable service. The way of transgressors is hard. The will and affections are at war with the understanding ; conscience like a fiery scorpion constantly harrasses ; while a variety of conflicting passions banish all tranquillity from the soul.

But besides these internal sources of sorrow, which must always be the concomitants of a sinful state, to the utter exclusion of all happiness, the soul lies under sentence of condemnation by the divine law ; for it is written, the soul that sinneth it shall die : cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them ; and he that offendeth in one point is guilty of the whole. Hence all the dreadful curses of the broken law pursue the rebel. The great and terrible God, who is a consuming fire to his enemies and whose anger burns to hell, is highly incensed ; and justice is inexorable.—His offences are incalculably great, so that he can by no means make restitution—His resources are nothing when compared with the immense debt contracted, and the doleful prison of everlasting despair yawns wide to receive him. Say then, my hearers, is not the redemption of the soul highly important and desirable ? That it is so will further appear from considering,

2. Its capacity for happiness. The powers of the human soul are of vast extent.—With peculiar ease it rises sublimely through immeasurable space, and travels to the utmost bounds of creation. On the swift wing of imagination it changes its situation at pleasure, and in an instant holds whatever commanding stand, in the universe is preferred, from which to look around and survey the works of God. From orb to orb it roves in sweet contemplation, admiring the wisdom, power and goodness of him who gave them birth. Yea, it can enter in through the veil into the holy of holies, and hold high converse with the inhabitants of heaven. Through the power of recollection it is capable of recalling and enjoying former scenes. The long lapse

of past ages is made to pass in review before it, so that the pleasure resulting from the contemplation of the providences of God is perpetuated.

It possesses also a power of looking forward through ages yet to come, and deriving happiness from the prospects of futurity. Thus it has free access to the past and future as well as to the present. The past is recalled and the future anticipated. The reflex and moral senses may each be gratified from the variety of subjects, both natural and moral, which lie within the sphere of its operation.

Besides, the human soul is capable of vast improvement. The point has never yet been ascertained beyond which it cannot advance. How great then its present capacity for happiness? And when redeemed from under the power of sin and admitted to the fountain of living waters, what copious draughts will it receive? What extatic joys will it feel? "The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their head; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Liberated from its deplorable state of bondage to sin, and admitted to join the Church of the first born; to hold high converse with Angels, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; to join in the song of Moses and the Lamb; and to bask in the smiles of the beatific Jehovah; who, *who*, can calculate the bliss? And when we consider that the existence of the soul will be without end, and that its capacity for enjoyment will be constantly expanding, the sum of happiness swells to infinitude. If the happiness of the soul is to be eternally progressive, then a period in eterni-

ty will arrive, when a soul of the meanest capacities, will advance beyond the present measure of Gabriel's felicity. Yea, a period must arrive when in a given portion of time it will be capable of as much happiness, as all created intelligents now are in the same portion of time.—Brethren, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. And now say, is not the redemption of a soul, capable of such consummate and immeasurable felicity, a precious object?

3. That the redemption of the soul is highly important and desirable, is evident from the magnitude of the price that has been paid for that purpose.

Infinite wisdom cannot mistake the real value of things, nor can it agree to purchase at an unreasonable rate. Yet the price paid to redeem the soul, by him who is *all wise*, is immense.

The Apostle calls Christ an unspeakable gift, and concludes that since God has not withheld his son, there is nothing too valuable for him to bestow. The soul of man could not be redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, nor with any thing, but the precious blood of Christ.—Burnt-offerings and sacrifices were vain. The blood of bulls and of goats, thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil, would avail nothing, yea the fruit of the body could not atone for the sin of the soul. Before redemption could be had, the eternal son of God must lay aside his shining robes, leave the regions of immortality, assume human nature, and in that establish the broken law and make it honorable.—Though rich he must become poor, and make himself of no

reputation ; though innocent he must endure all the sinless infirmities of our nature, and suffer temptation : for thus it became the captain *of our salvation to be made perfect through sufferings*. Submitting to all the requirements of the sacred law he must yield it sinless obedience and endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. He must be made sin for us, who knew no sin, and under the pressure of our imputed guilt, agonize till he sweat as it were great drops of blood ; be betrayed, unjustly condemned, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross, endure the hidings of his father's face, and the insults and cruelty of his crucifiers ; and that he might take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, he must pour out his precious blood, and in agonies expire. Surely then the redemption of the soul is precious in the view of Deity, or this immense price had not been paid.

4. The redemption of the soul is highly important and desirable, because a vast revenue of glory will thereby accrue to the SACRED THREE.

The glory of God shines no where so brightly as in the face of Jesus Christ. Here the character of Jehovah is exhibited with such mildness that mortals may behold, adore and learn ; and yet with such brilliancy as will invite the attention of angels ; yea, it will excite the gaze of cherubim and seraphim while eternity endures.

We can conceive of no other way in which God could have brought himself so fully into the view of his creatures, as he has in the work of redemption. The heavens declare his glory and the firmament showeth forth his handy works ; but the displays he has made of him-

self in creation are faint when compared with those in the work of redemption. Here the great fountain of his unfathomable wisdom is opened, and the angels desire to look into the mysteries of a plan, which reconciles *seeming* impossibilities. A plan in which *justice*, truth and mercy meet and completely harmonize in the pardon of sinners. In this plan justice is not only preserved from being sullied, but it shines forth with peculiar lustre. In the punishment of rebel angels God's justice was glorified ; but it appeared still more gloriously inflexible, when no part of the penalty for sin could be remitted, though the only begotten of the Father had become responsible. Though the darling of heaven had assumed the mighty debt and taken the sinners' place ; and though he submissively cried, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, yet divine justice made and received its full demand. O ! how bright is the exhibition of justice in the sufferings of Christ !

Nor does mercy appear less glorious in this wonderful scheme of redemption. It had an influence in laying the plan, and in the execution acted a conspicuous part. The demands of justice afforded an opportunity for this attribute to be brought into the full view of intelligent creatures. It had been before like a fountain sealed, but now it burst forth in copious and never failing streams. The holiness, faithfulness and all the attributes of Jehovah, harmoniously shine forth with peculiar lustre in this precious work, the redemption of the soul. The declarative glory of God will therein be greatly advanced, which is of the highest importance to the universe, and therefore dear to HIM whose name is

love. It was not *merely* compassion to our miserable, fallen race, that made the redemption of the soul so precious to Jehovah. No, his views were more extensive and embraced the good of being in general.—While he pitied our distress, he devised a plan for our deliverance in which he could glorify his great name, make himself more known to all ranks of holy intelligents, and thereby advance the happiness of the universe. Thus the apostle says, it is to the intent that now unto *principalities* and *powers* might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God. These objects were noble and worthy the attention of Jehovah. In the view of them the redemption of the soul is precious to him, and it ought to be so to all intelligent creatures. Hence we observe,

5. That the redemption of the soul will appear to be highly important and desirable, from taking into view the consequent increase of happiness among the various ranks of holy intelligents. The advancement of happiness in the universe must be an object grateful to the benevolent mind. And this takes place in an eminent degree through the redemption of immortal souls. It will be the case not only with respect to the individuals who shall be ransomed, they indeed shall return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, but all holy beings will partake of their enjoyment. They will rejoice in the deliverance of precious immortals; from a state of sin and death; accordingly we are informed that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. But the grand spring of holy felicity is the revelation of the divine character. God is the great fountain of good for all his intelligent creatures; all

their springs are in him. The mediums through which he communicates a knowledge of himself, are so many streams issuing from the great fountain at which those who love his appearing drink and are refreshed. But he can be enjoyed only as far as he is known.—Hence every new opening of the divine character is a source of fresh and superior delight. And as the various attributes of his nature are most clearly exhibited in the work of redemption, so there is hereby a great accession to the happiness of holy beings. Hence at the birth of the Saviour, when the glorious mystery began more fully to come into view, the rapturous song burst from angelic hosts, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men. The wonders of redeeming love will form a theme for saints and angels, through a long eternity. New discoveries of the glorious mysteries of salvation will be made and the character of Jehovah more and *more* developed. In Christ the God-man, as in a wondrous mirror, the invisible God becomes visible to his creatures, and there they behold, with raptures, his uncreated glories.—If then the work of redemption so reveals and diffuses the knowledge of that God, whom to know is life eternal; and if the happiness of the various ranks of holy intelligents has been and will continue to be so much augmented thereby, we may subscribe to the language of our text and say, The redemption of the soul is precious.

Thus from considering the miserable state of the soul by nature; its capacity for happiness; the price paid for its redemption; the glory that will thereby accrue to the SACRED THREE; and the consequent increase of happiness among the various ranks of holy intelli-

gents, it appears that the redemption of the soul of man is highly important and desirable.—It remains that some improvement be made of the subject.

1. How great are the obligations of gratitude to him who hath undertaken the work of man's redemption? This work, so important and desirable, had ceased for ever, had never been accomplished, had not the great Eternal himself undertaken it.—All the souls of men must have remained under the reigning power of sin, and sunk down in endless despair, under the pressure of divine wrath.—Justice, inexorable justice would have been displayed, though in a less conspicuous manner than it now is, while the glorious attribute of mercy, had still lain hid from the eye of intelligent creatures. Let then every heart swell with grateful emotions, to him that loved us and gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and make us kings and priests unto God; and that he might augment the happiness of all the various ranks of beings, who are delighted with the mild effulgence of infinite perfection.

2. If the redemption of the soul is an object so highly important and desirable, then it should engage the chief attention of christians, and draw forth their most vigorous exertions.—Brethren, it is the most noble subject to which the attention of mortals was ever called, the most important work in which they were ever employed.—God is the great efficient agent in this work, yet he honors us with being instruments in his hand. Accordingly the Apostle, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, says, We then as workers together with him beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.—The consideration of being fellow

workers with one another, and workers together with God, is calculated to support and animate the ministers of the gospel, in a *particular* manner ; and it should give a new spring to the exertions of all those who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity.—If God work with us, our business is honorable, and our labor shall not be in vain. Christians, then arise with active zeal, and let him that heareth say, come.

The redemption of the soul is precious. He that converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars, for ever and ever. Let the miserable state of sinners move your compassion, and make you importunate at the throne of grace. Let a regard to *their* happiness and your *own*, to the glory of God, and to the increase of angelic felicity, induce you to be faithful in the duty of warning, reproving, persuading and exhorting, with all long-suffering and doctrine.

3. Our subject exhibits the astonishing inconsistency of those who treat with neglect the provision that is made for their salvation. Sinners, the redemption of your souls is precious beyond all calculation. In vain do you dream of happiness while strangers to Christ. You are under cruel bondage to sin, the wrath of God abideth on you, and unless redeemed you go down to the chambers of death ; to everlasting despair. Can you contemplate these things with indifference ? I pray you consider the value of your immortal souls.—Are they not formed for the most refined and consummate bliss, or to endure misery supreme ? Will not their existence run parallel with the longest lines of eternity ? And does not the price

of redemption bespeak their value immense? Will you then barter them away for the imaginary joys of an hour? Oh! the height of madness and folly!—What shall you be profited if you should gain the whole world, and lose your own souls? I beseech you consider what Christ has done and suffered that you *might* be redeemed. Remember how much all benevolent beings are engaged for your salvation.—And will you, who are most deeply interested, remain indifferent? Can you be regardless of your eternal destiny, when it has arrested the attention of all the intelligent universe? Shall infinite wisdom lay a plan for your redemption, shall the Saviour bleed and die to execute it, and shall the ambassadors of *Heaven* present it to you, and plead in vain? Shall God's people pray and weep over you? Shall Angels look down with anxious eye; and shall the Holy Spirit woo and beseech you to no purpose? Will nothing rouse you from your guilty slumbers? Must your immortal souls perish, while such complete provision is made? Oh! I beseech you, have some compassion on yourselves. Yea, I adjure you by the value of your immortal souls, by the dying love of a Saviour, by the tremendous horrors of Hell, and by all the bright and ineffable glories of Heaven, to turn without delay from your sins by repentance, and accept of offered mercy.—Then will saints and Angels feel a new spring of joy in your deliverance, and you will unite with them, while eternity lasts, to testify, that the redemption of your souls was precious.











